



Gen-Connect is a limited series showcasing "generations connecting" as teens from Redmond's Old Firehouse Teen Center meet and interview participants from Redmond Senior Programs. For each installment, the teen panel will conduct and write the interview article.

The July 2021 installment features Dennis Anderson, a volunteer and active member of Redmond Senior Programs.

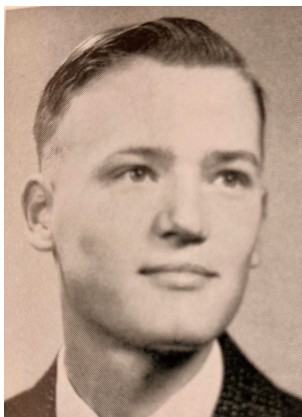
Teen Interview Panel and writers: Baika, Nigel, Neha, and Jamie.

We had a great conversation with Mr. Anderson and when asked about the different types of jobs he's done, we were surprised to learn he had once run a stable for a Calvary unit.

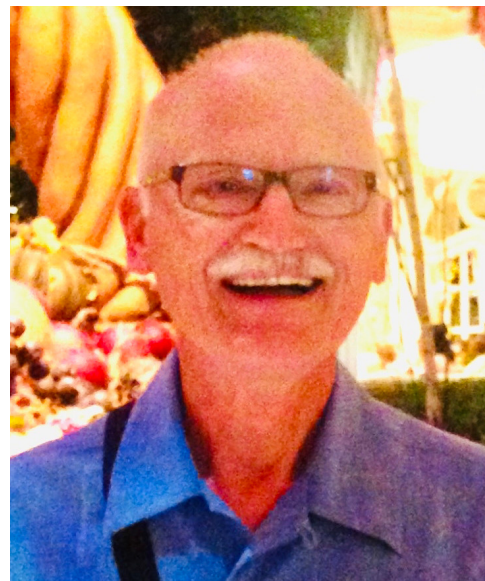
Dennis Anderson is a man of many hats, from second lieutenant [in the Army], to a cavalry unit's horse stable caretaker, and finally to a beloved teacher. When he was in the army, one of his peers asked him if he was interested in helping with the horses for the cavalry unit. Mr. Anderson has never been averse to a challenge and agreed. Essentially Mr. Anderson believes, "Change is good. I like change, obviously, I have had a lot of it." Prepping many horses for skilled soldiers and twenty-three horses for excited kids [to ride] was the kind of change he was looking for. This experience brought a realization, his love for working with kids. The awareness was not the only awakening the army brought Mr. Anderson: The fondness for Washington was another bonus.

As we discussed how he found his way to Washington, he shared memories of being stationed here during his time in the military.

An ironic occurrence led him to get a feel for the Seattle area. As a second lieutenant, he was sent to Washington. Mr. Anderson joked, "I have had live ammunition shot a few inches above me, which made me comfortable with the area." That comfortability created a connection between Mr. Anderson and the Washington area. After the army, he



Dennis Anderson as a high school graduate and Dennis today.



pursued his dream of teaching and came to Washington with his adored wife.

As our conversation continued, Mr. Anderson shared what he likes about Redmond and how he got started doing some of his favorite hobbies.

When asked about what he currently loves about Washington, Mr. Anderson happily listed, "I like the area because it is kind of a small-town atmosphere. My wife and I like to walk, so we walk the trails and along the river. Now there are nicer places to go and eat and have a cup of coffee. The senior center has been very nice. I can walk there too. They are nice people."

Mr. Anderson's fondness for Washington is big. After all, Mr. Anderson has lived in eleven states and traveled to both Europe and Mexico. With traveling and living habits like Mr. Anderson, it is like a game of "Where's Waldo?"

Despite continuously moving to different states in America, Mr. Anderson has settled down in two states he has grown to love: Washington and Arizona. Like a migrating bird following the warm weather, Mr. Anderson prefers the Washingtonian summer and Arizonian winter. After retiring, his wife encouraged him to take on another hat. "I was a bit of a workaholic," Mr. Anderson explained, "When I retired my wife was worried, I wouldn't have anything to do. Turns out there is a lot of things you can do. At the senior center, I played pickleball. I liked it because it wasn't extraneous on the body, it was easier than tennis, and it was fun. I

became treasurer of the club. We raised about 84,000 dollars to build pickleball courts.” Repeatedly, Mr. Anderson has shown that change can open one’s eyes to new favorite activities. “Anything in life, you have to make it interesting. You have to make goals and reach those goals,” Mr. Anderson consistently reminds the people around him, “You have to be happy all life, or you will wish you were back in a different time.”

Currently, Mr. Anderson plays golf and pickleball and spends most of his time with his wife of fifty-one years, “We eat out a lot because my wife’s tired of cooking and I can’t cook.” He and his wife help their daughter with their grandson.

As our conversation continued, Mr. Anderson shared more memories about school, one crazy thing he did during study hall one day and some very thoughtful ideas about living a good life. “I’ll go back to my sophomore year in high school. A small town in New Mexico and it was a small high school. In those days, there was one period a day called study hall, where you work on your homework. The supervisor of student hall was the sports coach. Our coach couldn’t answer homework questions much since he was the coach and didn’t teach math or anything. He would sit in the corner and read the newspaper or magazine. One day, the five of us decided we would play a prank. It was getting close to the end of the year and it was hot so the big windows in the room were wide open. So, we jumped out of the windows and a senior drove us in his car and drove to the country. We were four boys and one girl. The three of us took off our clothes and jumped into the water reservoir and the other two were nervous to since there was a girl. When we were done, we snuck in through the window and the coach was still reading. We never got caught, not even a little bit,”

Mr. Anderson is a comical, conscientious, 81-year-old man whose days are spent mostly making the people around him smile than getting into mischief. He is a man who hates hunting despite it being a hobby of his father’s because, “When you see a beautiful animal and kill it, you realize you can’t do this anymore.” He is a man who loves his family, meeting new people, and trying new things.

When asked what are some of his favorite times in life and favorite things to do, he shared his thoughtful perspective. With the various interesting experiences Mr. Anderson has had, he still couldn’t pinpoint his favorite period of his life. “I’ve enjoyed a lot, I guess, in all 81 years. There are all so different, I lived in a lot of different places and did a lot of different things. My wife would ask me what my favorite food is, but I won’t answer that because then, whatever else I eat isn’t my favorite. In my life, I have had difficulties, of course but, there is an old saying: ‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going.’ Wherever you go and whatever you do, learn as much as you can.”

